

TIMEWELL's
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
COW POX.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

COW POX :

THE

Causes of Failure of Vaccination,

AND

THE MODES OF PREVENTION.

BY

JOSEPH TIMEWELL,


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TO PARENTS,

ESPECIALLY

To those Tender and affectionate Mothers,

WHO ARE ANXIOUS TO

SECURE THEIR CHILDREN

From the Ravages of Disease,

AND

Preserve the Beauty of their Offspring,

These Observations

Are respectfully dedicated,

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

WITH a view to alleviate the distress of parents suffering under the most agonizing fears, lest their offspring should be subject to one of the most loathsome and fatal diseases incident to man (the small pox), I am induced to offer a few remarks on its antidote, the cow pox, and, at the same time, to point out some of the general causes why this latter disease is not universally successful as preventive of the former. I am well aware, that much and very valuable information may be found in works already published on this important subject, yet in none of

them can I find that the cow pox has been considered of that nature which (in truth) requires more than ordinary consideration. It is generally mentioned and handled by medical men, as well as other advocates for its adoption, in so slight a manner, that the public in general scarcely allow it to be a *specific disease*; yet there is no man, who bestows a moment's consideration on the subject, but must confess, that it is not only a disease, but a poison introduced into the constitution, to prevent one infinitely more rancorous and inveterate.

I am induced to make these observations public at the present moment, as it is evident that the invaluable discovery of Dr. Jenner has suffered a slight diminution in the estimation of the public; indeed if it may be judged from the few persons who attended the anniversary meeting of Dr. Walker's Institution in

London this year, it may be supposed that it is not only slightly, but greatly diminished; but, I am happy to say, accounts from all parts of the world were very satisfactory, and the cause of so few attending was the then pending City election; only the Lord Mayor, Dr. Walker, his medical secretary, myself, and about thirty ladies and gentlemen were present.

When inoculation for the small pox was first introduced, the preparation for it was carried to an extravagant and ridiculous extent, yet, I must believe it was erring on the right side; and I also believe, that not preparing to receive the cow pox is equally erring on the wrong; and I conscienciously assert, that the anti-vaccinators would find no ground whatever for the support of argument against the benign antidote, if the friends of humanity and vaccination

would only take necessary precautions to ensure their success; I speak thus confidently, as I have vaccinated some thousands, and never, in one solitary instance have I found a case of *genuine* small pox follow, or any symptom of disease which did not previously exist in the constitution. If, to my peculiar mode of treatment of this complaint, my success is to be attributed, I feel anxious that the public should have the full benefit of any information in my power to give.

Few medical men are more scrupulous in giving medicine, than myself; and none more determined, when it is absolutely necessary: I make this observation, that I may not be considered as one who is only desirous of filling the pockets of apothecaries; those who know my mode of practice will be ready to assert, that no medical practitioner prescribes less

medicine than myself, and that I am seldom deceived by my patients, as I, in general, personally administer it.

The officers of the national vaccine establishment, in publishing their observations on the mode of vaccinating, the nature, description, &c. of the disease, make the following remarks: “ Medicine in general, is not required in this mild disease. If, however, the febrile symptoms should be higher than usual, the disorder should be treated as inflammatory fever.” “ No medicines are necessary before vaccination, but the subject should be free from obvious disease.” No man can feel a higher respect for the medical officers of that establishment than I do, yet I beg leave to offer my dissent as to the last sweeping clause, and I think on reflection they will be of my opinion; indeed that opinion is included in the latter part of the last sentence. Unfor-

fortunately for mankind, our nature is exposed to such an endless variety of insidious complaints, that few, if any of us, can say we are free from disease, spot, or blemish, hence the necessity of paying the most scrupulous attention to the constitution of the patient who is to be vaccinated; at any rate, to endeavour to cure or relieve the existing malady, more especially if it be scrofulous or cutaneous; if this be attended to, I am sure that much of the mischief which *is said* to follow this happy preventive of the greatest scourge of mankind, may be obviated, and the anti-vaccinators confuted.

I am not only desirous that the patient should be prepared to receive the disease, but, that every symptom should be minutely watched during its continuance, and even after it is over, some little attention should be paid, effectually to get rid of the shock, which it cannot be

denied, the constitution receives in a greater or less degree, indeed, I will hazard this opinion, *that if the constitution be not saturated or thoroughly impregnated, either by inoculation for the small, or by vaccination for the cow pox, they are equally liable to failures, and the patient is exposed to the small pox naturally.*

Dr. Jenner published his inquiry into the cause and effects of the *variola vaccinae*, or a disease known by the name of the cow pox, in 1798; his experiments were conducted under the inspection of, and reported to, many noble and scientific men, among them, that truly excellent character, the late Rt. Hon. Lord Somerville, and that great ornament to science, the late Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Banks: having had the honor of residing with the former, as his more immediate medical attendant, in

this country, and also on the continent; the subject of my present observations, has often been the topic of conversation, and I was enabled to gain much original information. I have since again perused the work above alluded to, which strengthens the truth of the observations I have made, as to the constitutional effects of the disease. Among the twenty-three cases mentioned as successfully treated in that work, there is not one but refers to the constitutional symptoms, or sickening as for the small pox, such as uneasiness in the axilla, little chilliness, loss of appetite; restlessness, slight head ache, &c. in short, the patient was perceptibly indisposed. It appears that when the patient receives the disease immediately from the cow, that the symptoms are of a more violent nature, the lymphatic glands of the arm and axilla are affected, shiverings, succeeded

by heat, lassitude, general pains in the limbs, accompanied by fever and delirium.

As further illustrative of the doctrine here advanced I shall mention a few cases which appear to me to confirm my opinion; some months since I was called to a lady residing in the north part of London, who had been vaccinated many years previous, it happened just at that time, that part of town was thrown into the utmost consternation by a report that “a child had died of the natural small pox, who had been vaccinated, and that another of the same family was not expected to recover;” my patient informed me where I may have an opportunity of ascertaining the truth of the story, I immediately waited on the mother of the children, when to my, and no doubt to my readers great astonishment, I found that the deceased child had neither been vaccinated nor inoculated, and as to the

one reported to on be the point of death, she had a solitary small pock on the lip, previously sore, from kissing her infant brother just previous to his decease. I was induced from these circumstances to make minute inquiries, and I found that four living children, having all been vaccinated in the country, were constitutionally infected, and were each marked with four or five cicatrices; at this time the children slept in the same room, and two of them in the same bed, previous to the death of the brother, yet none of them had a symptom of the small pox, besides the slight one mentioned. I have since that seen a family at Chelsea, by name Shopland, the father keeps the Ranelagh toll bar, near the bun house, six in number, four of whom have been vaccinated and took the disease properly, the other two were not, and took the small pox naturally, the termination of which nearly proved

fatal to both; they did however recover, the little girl with the loss of an eye, and dreadful scars have ravaged the face, the boy is also considerably marked; the four who had been vaccinated nursed and slept with them, but not a symptom of small pox appeared. If any one has a doubt of the efficacy of the cow pox when effectually introduced, let them contemplate those cases and judge for themselves; and if it be convenient for them to see the persons, I am persuaded not one in a thousand but will be convinced, however prejudiced against it they may be.

As instances of the occasional failure of small pox inoculation, and the superiority of vaccination, I shall mention the following cases occurring in one family; a Mrs. Whitelaw's, of No. 3, North Street, Sloane Street. Mrs. W. was inoculated in the year 1795, and in 1797 she took the disease naturally, and had it very

severely; she is now nursing a relation, a poor little idiot, a child of eleven years old, who has the small pox *naturally*, a second time, and in caressing the child she has taken the infection a third time, and has absolutely a small pock on her nose, which will go through its regular stages; her son who has been vaccinated has exposed himself to the influence of the disease in the same room, and has not a symptom.

If argument were necessary with regard to administering medicines, and otherwise preparing the patient to receive the disease, I should reason from analogy; if it be admitted that both diseases are poisons (which they undoubtedly are), I beg leave to ask why you deem it necessary to prepare your child to receive the one, and not the other?

In my own practice, I attend strictly to certain rules, particularly among the

poor, where you are more likely to meet ignorance and prejudice combined with low cunning,* to counteract your best intentions, I prepare myself, therefore, to meet with opposition, either from the parents, friends, or nurse of the patient, and being thus prepared, I never fail to take all necessary precautions. On being called upon to vaccinate a healthy child, I always inquire if the small pox is in the neighbourhood, and if I find it is not, I look out for a healthy patient, under the influence of the vaccine-virus, allowing three or four days for preparation, during which time, I carefully examine my new patient, and should I

*A case occurred to me some time since in a workhouse, where both diseases existed; I had vaccinated a child four days previous to my visit, when I found this child in bed, enclosed in the arms of another, with the small pox, in the worst state; fortunately, however, my little charge sustained up injury.

observe disease, I delay the operation, until I get rid, if possible, of the existing malady; if, however, there should be none, the child is put on a diet, and medicine administered according to circumstances; if, about the fourth day, I find it free from fever, and the primæ viæ in a proper state, I proceed to vaccinate, taking, if possible, the virus from one child's arm, and immediately introducing it into the other's arms, in six different places, invariably observing to take the virus from the infected arm on the eighth day. I find previous to, and during the operation, one essential point necessary, which is to win over the children's confidence, and make what you are about to do, appear playful or indifferent to them: this is of more importance than is generally supposed, as much inflammation follows a harsh and irritating mode of taking the virus. I

never wound the pustule but once, as I find I can get plenty of matter for a great number, by a very slight pressure on the side opposite to the aperture, which I make small, and with a very sharp lancet: as to the remainder of the operation, I follow the same plan as recommended by the national vaccine establishment, or nearly so, but with the greatest tenderness. During the progress of the pustules, I watch them carefully, and on the eighth day, I am generally able to pronounce it successful; on that day all the genuine pock are generally surrounded at the base by an inflamed circle: they very much resemble in shape, the fruit of the wild mallow: I have found the comparison very useful in practice, in ascertaining whither the patients have had the *genuine* cow pox; the characteristics of the tumour are as follow: it is circular, the edge is round and elevated, and the centre depressed;

it changes from the sixth to the ninth day from a pink to a bluish, and ultimately to a pearl color, the middle darker than the parts surrounding; although I have mentioned the eighth day as a general rule for those appearances, yet there are some exceptions, as the time may be longer, but seldom shorter than that mentioned. It is however necessary at some period of the disease, that it should assume the above appearance; or it cannot be depended upon as genuine. During the progress of the pustules to, and after maturity, it is necessary to be very cautious that they may not be scratched or otherwise injured. From my previous treatment, I seldom find fever run high about the twelfth or fourteenth day; by way of caution I attend to the stomach, bowels, and skin of my patient, and act according to circumstances; in some cases I find it necessary

to vaccinate the same day I am called, in consequence of the prevalence of the small pox in the neighbourhood; even, then I endeavour to abate the violence of any existing malady, that it may not counteract the vaccine virus, and if there be no time to cure it, I proceed to vaccinate, but with more than usual caution, keeping a good bar against prejudice, by letting the parents see that the complaint has not escaped my observation.

Among the many causes, why failures take place, I know of none so prevalent as spurious pustules: thousands are vaccinated at public institutions and never return to be inspected by the vaccinator; the consequence naturally arising from such neglect, is, that many have not the disease at all, when they fancy they have: when the small pox comes out about these patients, the parents inform you they are

quite certain the child has had the cow pox, as the arm rose to the size of a pigeon's egg, or a large marble, which every medical man knows is a spurious pustule and perfectly insecure; but who is to remove the impression from the mind of parents? who tell you it must be genuine as the great doctor A. or the great surgeon Z. performed the operation? In order to prevent this from occurring in the institution to which I was a medical officer some years, it was a practice for the secretary to receive half a crown from every patient, which was returned to the person when cured on their appearing at the time appointed; this had also the effect of keeping generosity alive, as when finally discharged, every patient was furnished with a letter of thanks to the subscriber who recommended them: I beg most respectfully to suggest to subscribers of public institutions, that by recommending only real objects of charity

(and they will find plenty) they will benefit the public more effectually and better answer the purposes for which those charities were originally intended, then by indiscriminately lavishing their power to do good; and thus honorable and scientific medical men will find (what I lament to say all have not) *a livelihood*, a circumstance much to be regretted, especially when the immense expence is considered which a medical gentleman incurs to qualify himself to practice legally, and that he is liable to answer in a court of justice for want of skill, &c.

I have seen many instances where the vesicles have assumed, for a few days, all the appearance of regular pustules, and then die away; this generally takes place from an unhealthy state of the skin, something in the constitution which counteracts the effects of the virus, or want of due preparation for its reception; the cause should

be removed previous to having again recourse to the operation, which is absolutely necessary, as no dependence can be placed on the former: a case of this description has recently fallen under my inspection. A child of a gentleman, not far from town, was vaccinated at an early age, by a professional man of eminence and affluence, who, no doubt, deserved the confidence placed in him as an accoucheur, &c. a single pustule assumed for a few days all the appearance of a genuine cow pock, when it died away; the father, who is a man of science, mentioned the circumstance to the gentleman, who said, that notwithstanding this, he may rely that his child was secure; however, to give satisfaction, he had no objection to vaccinate the child again, this was accordingly done, and the infant received no infection whatever; this the medical gentleman considered as a true criterion that the

child had received the disease properly in the first instance, and that it was secure from the small pox ; I however differed in opinion, and the child is to be vaccinated again. Now if among medical gentlemen of the first eminence, there can be found any who know so little about the disease in question, and that such a blunder as is described could be committed, can it be wondered at, that so many failures take place, especially when it is taken into the account how many ignorant pretenders to the healing art are employed, not to say private individuals who have never studied medicine at all, are intrusted with the care of a disease, which I assert, without fear of contradiction, requires as nice a discrimination, and as much attention as any that is incident to man.

I own it is a nice point to decide whether it is necessary to vaccinate again or not. If patients are in doubt, if they

really have had the disease properly or not; it is necessary to take into consideration as much collateral information as can be obtained, when I think professional gentlemen who have attended minutely to the disease can with safety decide, but where the evidence preponderates at all in favour of its repetition, I have always had recourse to further operation, and from experience do most respectfully recommend the same practice to others; I am always anxious to get as many pustules as possible, that the constitution may be more decidedly infected.

It has been the wish of many that the legislature would interfere, and compel parents to have their children vaccinated, but this would be impracticable with a free people, though it has been tried in some foreign countries with success; I consider it now in some measure in the power of medical men to adopt which disease they

approve, but I am sorry to say, there are those who encourage the prejudices of the ignorant from pecuniary motives and who are so hardened that no appeal on the score of humanity will induce them to sacrifice private emolument to public duty. It is really distressing to observe the apathy with which we see these individuals, and the cruel parents of children, witness the earth open to receive thousands of their fellow creatures, whom they have consigned to an untimely grave, by suffering them to become victims to a disease which experience has taught them to be the most dangerous, disgusting, and destructive.

Let us, my professional brethren, have the gallantry, as well as the humanity to reflect, that the BEAUTY of our race as well as ITS HEALTHFUL EXISTENCE is in our hands, and whilst societies are every where formed and money lavished

for the preservation and beautifying of our domestic animals, shall man, "the paragon of animals," alone be allowed to deteriorate and suffer individual blemish? No! let us unite with heart and hand, and make one grand effort to endeavour to exterminate the disease, and we shall accomplish much towards restoring, and preserving the health and primitive beauty of mankind. I am fully persuaded that much, if not every thing is to be done by getting rid of previous maladies, and introducing the benign antidote with proper and strict precautions; give it a fair trial and I live in confident hope that the day will arrive when that most detestable of all diseases, the small pox will only be known by name.

JOSEPH TIMEWELL.

Mount Street, Grosvenor Square,
July 6th, 1820.